



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Jeffrey M. Laugero

Chief Deputies
Marlisa Ferreira
Wendell Emerson
Michael D. Houston
Mark Zahner

Bureau of Investigation
Chief Terry L. Seese

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 22, 2022
Re: Zhi Jian Mei
Convicted Killer Denied Parole

For More Information Contact:

John Goold, Public Information Liaison
Phone: (209) 525-6909

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Zhi Jian Mei, age 40, formerly of Modesto was found unsuitable for parole during a September 28, 2022 hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Avenal State Prison in Avenal. Prosecutor Holly MacKinnon appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On May 5, 2011, Mei went after hours to the China Gourmet Restaurant in Modesto to ask his boss of three years, Wing Ming Chan, for another pay advance to cover his gambling debts. Chan refused to loan Mei any more money and a physical altercation ensued, culminating in Mei grabbing a chopping knife from the restaurant kitchen and stabbing Chan 141 times in his head, face, neck and body. After the victim did not come home that night, his wife went to their business where she found his body on the restaurant kitchen floor.

In March of 2016, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury found Mei guilty of second-degree murder along with an enhancement for personally using a deadly or dangerous weapon in the commission of the crime. On May 2, 2016, Judge Nancy Leo sentenced Mei to serve 16 years-to-life in state prison.

A prison psychologist who examined Mei prior to the parole hearing gave the opinion that he currently poses a low risk for future violence if he were to be released into the community. However, Mei associated with an Asian gang in prison in 2019 and the psychologist stated returning to associating with anti-social individuals, particularly individuals who gamble and drink, could lead to a significant increase in Mei's risk for violence.

Prosecutor MacKinnon asked the Board to deny parole due to Mei's very recent gang association and the fact that he has only received approximately four years of prison rehabilitative programming. MacKinnon argued that the brutality and callousness in the way the murder was committed combined with Mei's lack of sufficient insight into why he suddenly and viciously killed an innocent man and father make him an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if he were to be released from prison.

Office: 832 12th Street, Suite 300 Modesto, CA 95354 Mailing: PO BOX 442 Modesto, CA 95353
Telephone: (209) 525-5550 Fax: (209) 558-4027 www.stanislaus-da.org



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Mr. Chan's daughter also appeared at Mei's parole hearing and told the board she was only days away from graduating from middle school when her father was murdered. She shared the traumatic effect her father's death had on her childhood and her entire extended family. She was adamantly opposed to Mei's release from prison custody.

After deliberations, the Board denied release for five years stating that, although Mei had shown progress in some areas, he also admitted he felt no remorse for the first seven years after the murder. The Board felt his programming had not been sustained for a sufficient period of time given the callousness of his crime and his lack of insight into how he could violently murder a friend. The Board encouraged Mei to develop more stress coping tools to deal with risk factors and to participate in vocational and educational programming.

This was Mei's first parole hearing. He will be eligible for another parole hearing in 2027 although that date may be advanced if he can show a change in circumstances.

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